

Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce
2010 Legislative and Public
Policy Agenda



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As the voice of business in the Charleston metro region, the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce is committed to keeping our region competitive and improving the business climate. One of the best ways we can achieve this goals is through the legislative process. The Chamber is proud to work on behalf of our members to advocate policies and legislation that contributes to the growth and prosperity of our region.

Our agenda is organized into the following categories:

*Business Creation, Retention and Expansion
and Recruitment*

Education and Workforce Development

Environment and Energy

Healthcare

Hospitality

International Trade and the Port Expansion

*Military Base/Federal Facilities Retention
and Expansion*

Regulatory

Regional Land Use and Planning

Transportation and Infrastructure

Under each category, you will find state, federal and local priorities. To find out more or to get involved in the Chamber's Public Policy efforts, sign up for ChamberWatch, our online advocacy tool. Through ChamberWatch, you will receive updates on issues as well as alerts on issues and legislation. Sign up through the Chamber's website at www.charlestonchamber.net.

Developing the Agenda:

Each year, the Chamber identifies the top legislative priorities that we will pursue in the South Carolina General Assembly. The work on the Chamber's annual agenda actually begins in the spring of each year while the legislative session is still underway. The Chamber begins the planning process with a membership survey asking for input in identifying key issues.

In May, the Board of Directors takes the survey information and sets the priorities for the Chamber through the development of the annual Program of Work. Based upon the four-year Strategic Plan, the Program of Work outlines the focus of the Chamber's programs for the coming 12 months. By identifying the key issues of the membership and reviewing the overall strategic goals, the Board helps Public Policy begin to focus on issues.

In late summer, the Public Policy Committee begins its work for the new program year, often with briefings on various issues followed by discussion as to which issues to add to the annual agenda. Chamber committees such as the Environmental/Health and Safety Committee, the Business Continuity Planning Council, Developers Council and others also forward recommendations to the Public Policy Committee for consideration.

The Public Policy Committee is comprised of representatives of various committees, task forces and sectors of the Chamber's membership in an effort to ensure all types, sizes and business interests are involved in the public policy process.

The Chamber also hosts the annual Coastal Grassroots meeting in conjunction with the Berkeley, Greater Summerville/Dorchester County and Colleton/Walterboro Chamber. The event is one of nine the SC State Chamber holds across the state in August and September to gather input from business leaders on issues that need to be addressed. Members identify issues at the annual grassroots meeting which are also considered for the legislative agenda.

The Chamber also looks for those issues that may be unique to the businesses community in the Charleston area. Any Chamber member interested in public policy can become involved and help develop the priority legislative agenda items by signing up through the Chamber's online advocacy tool ChamberWatch.

Implementation Plan:

Once the agenda is adopted, the Public Policy Committee and Chamber staff communicate the priority issues to local, state and federal officials through the following ways:

1. **Contact with Elected Officials:** The Chamber maintains an active relationship with members of the tri-county legislative delegation, congressional members and their staffs and with local elected officials along with city and county staff. The Chamber meets with the appropriate elected officials on an ongoing basis to discuss issues impacting the business community.
2. **Legislative Reception:** The Chamber also hosts local, state and federal elected officials at the annual legislative reception held each January. The legislative agenda is distributed to all attendees at the event.
3. **ChamberWatch:** The Chamber's online advocacy tool, ChamberWatch also sends alerts to members and periodic updates on legislative issues throughout the year. Members can easily contact their legislators and elected officials through ChamberWatch.
4. **D.C. Fly-In:** Each spring the Chamber organizes a two-day trip to Washington, D.C. to call on congressional members. Members hear briefings from Committee members and staff as well as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

2010 Public Policy Committee

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South Carolina Federal Credit Union

Patrick Bryant

Go To Team

Jay Byars

Good Faith Mortgage

Deb Campeau

Trident Health System

Gary Cohen

Market Pavilion Hotel

Bobby Creech, CPA

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Rob Davis

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Jennifer DeWitt

Lowcountry Manufacturers Council

Catherine Dority

Charleston Area Convention &
Visitors Bureau

Rew "Skip" Godow

Lowcountry Graduate Center

John Harrell

Harrell Law Firm PA

Robert Hayes

ManTech/Charleston Defense
Contractors Association

Brent Jonas

Arthur Ravenel, Jr. Co.

Mary Joseph

Mary T. Joseph-State Farm Insurance

Kaye Koonce

Trident Technical College

Walter Lagarenne

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Stacey Lindbergh

Palmetto Behavioral Health

Michael Long

Wild Dunes Resort

Paul Mashburn

Mashburn Construction

David Maybank III

Maybank Properties LLC
Chamber Chairman of the Board

Mike McGinty

BlueCross BlueShield of S.C.

Barbara Melvin

South Carolina State Ports Authority

John "Jack" Mitchell

AT&T

Richard Moore

Kestrel Horizons LLC

Bobby Pearce

Nelson Mullins Law Firm
Chamber Chairman-Elect

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Business Creation, Recruitment, Retention and Expansion

The Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce supports legislation that will support the region's efforts to attract quality business, industry and jobs to the area and to expand existing business and industry. In particular, the Chamber supports the expansion of growth clusters including the maritime and port industry, the hospitality industry, defense and homeland security and the development and expansion of knowledge-based business.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Seek changes to the current state incentives for film productions in order to attract both production of films, television, etc., and to attract a production studio to locate on the campus of Trident Technical College.
- Promote the creation of legislation to provide tax credits to individuals who provide angel investor funding to knowledge-based businesses.

Federal Legislative Priorities:

- The Chamber supports the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition and joins more than 400 leaders in all 50 states in support of a robust International Affairs Budget as an investment in the tools of development and diplomacy to protect national security, build economic prosperity and strengthen humanitarian values.
- The Chamber supports an open market system to enhance and increase world trade through free trade agreements.
- As a member of the national Coalition for a democratic workplace, the Chamber will work to protect secret ballot elections, will continue to oppose any changes to labor organizing efforts that will lesson employee rights, and maintain support for right-to-work legislation.
- The Chamber urges Congress to fund the Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Labor and other federal programs that provide estimates of the population, demographic trends, employment and labor data, and other economic data that form the basis for regional and local economic planning and decision-making.

Education and Workforce Development

Mobilizing the resources and leadership necessary to achieve excellence in academics and career preparation is one of the top priorities of the Chamber. Public Policy will advocate the changes necessary in primary and secondary schools to prepare all students for the careers of the future.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Working with the Coastal Chambers Alliance and Coastal Legislative Caucus, advocate for reform of the current state funding formula used to fund public education. The current formula, based upon an index of tax paying ability, is obsolete with the passage in 2006 of the state's property tax reform legislation.
- Promote the expansion of state-wide universal 4-K program within the public education system.
- Oppose any effort that does not fully fund public education on a fair and equitable basis for all children.
- Support full funding of the S.C. Education and Economic Development Act/Personal Pathways.
- Support funding for a new nursing, science and math facility

and expanded nursing curriculum at Trident Technical College to help address critical nursing shortages in the region. Trident Technical College is requesting \$30 million from the General Assembly for the project.

- Support the funding of new space to accommodate the growth in programs and enrollment of the Lowcountry Graduate Center.
- Support the recommendations of the Commission on Higher Education Action Plan for Higher Education in South Carolina, including increased investments in higher education.
- Support maintaining \$47 million in Lottery Tuition Assistance (LTA) for S.C. students to attend technical college. One in three technical college students relies on LTA. This funding provides access to affordable higher education and training necessary to enter or remain in the workforce. The goal of the technical colleges is to keep the award at no less than \$900 per semester.
- Support passage of House Bill 3841 – Administrative Efficiencies Bill for the Technical College System and H3365 “Higher Education Efficiency and Administrative Policies Act. Both bills would provide the state’s technical colleges and higher education institutions receiving state funding flexibility in how funding is allocated.

Federal Legislative Priorities:

- As a member of the national Coalition for a democratic workplace, the Chamber will work to protect secret ballot elections, will continue to oppose any changes to labor organizing efforts that will lesson employee rights and maintain support for right-to-work legislation.
- The Chamber works actively with The Education Foundation and congressional offices to secure additional funding through the U.S. Department of Education’s Smaller Learning Communities Programs.
- Additionally, the Chamber will advocate to designate The Education Foundation as an eligible fiscal agent for Department of Education grants.

Local Priorities

- The Chamber will continue to work to improve public education in the region, with an emphasis on the implementation of the Education Economic Development Act and the development of career clusters in all area high schools to better prepare students for the future workforce.
- The Chamber will continue to work with higher education representatives, the Lowcountry Graduate Center, and business community to expand the offerings of the LGC in the area of advanced degrees to support the development of the clusters recommended in the Forward Charleston report.

Environment and Energy

The Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce must work to ensure that environmental regulation encourages and supports a growing economy while balancing and protecting the region's quality of life. Environmental legislation regulation should not unnecessarily increase the administrative burden, resulting in unnecessary regulations, project delays or become cost prohibitive to business.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Urge the development of a comprehensive energy policy that encourages wise use and management of South Carolina's natural resources, ensures that we have adequate supplies for the future that are reasonably priced and generated in an environmentally responsible manner; works with our surrounding states and federal government to seek alternative energy solutions and carefully considers the comprehensive impacts of the development of any alternative energy sources.
- Work to ensure that State environmental regulations and legislation are based on science, not emotion and regulations are not more stringent than federal regulations.
- Support adequate state funding for DHEC so that they can process permits efficiently.
- Support the clarification of isolated wetlands regulation to eliminate multiple regulation.
- Support replacement of the state's aging school bus fleet as a way of reducing diesel air emissions.
- Support allowing SC DHEC to return to the Dissolved Oxygen Standard of 0.1 milligram/liter – the standard that has been in place since the early 1980's and the standard currently used for the Savannah Harbor system.

Federal Legislative Priorities:

- The Chamber supports the development of a comprehensive energy policy at the federal level to reduce the country's dependency on foreign oil, to encourage nuclear power funding and development, and to help reduce impacts on global warming, including allowing exploration of off-shore drilling in South Carolina as well as exploration and development of renewable energy resources.

Local Priorities:

- The Chamber will partner with other organizations in efforts to reduce air emissions and to maintain the region's air attainment status.

Healthcare

The rising cost of healthcare directly impacts business. One of the contributors to rising costs is the increased cost to the state's Medicaid system for providing healthcare to the uninsured. The Chamber will work to reduce healthcare costs for business.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Support modification of the health insurance cooperative legislation passed in 2008 to lower the number of years businesses must commit from five years to two.
- Support Medicaid reform as long as it does not adversely affect the cost of healthcare.
- Support an increase in the state's cigarette tax to at least the same rate as North Carolina and Georgia as a means of providing recurring funding of Medicaid in order to maximize federal funding.
- Support adequate funding for hospitalization of indigent mental health patients in the tri-county area.

Federal Legislative Priorities:

- The Chamber opposes any legislation that includes a public health option, employer mandates and surtaxes on small business. Additionally, the Chamber supports
 - Incentives for employers to create wellness plans
 - Medical liability/tort reform
 - The ability to purchase insurance across state lines
 - Adoption of information technologies to establish electronic medical records, decision support mechanism and claims processing.

Local Priorities:

- The Chamber will work to reduce healthcare costs by working with local governments as well as organizations such as Tri-County Project Care and Trident United Way to generate alternative coverage options for the uninsured and underinsured, including those needing mental health services.

Hospitality

Visitors are a multi-billion dollar business in the Charleston region and provide thousands of jobs – both directly and indirectly. In 2008, there were an estimated 4 million people who visited the region, contributing an estimated \$3 billion to the local economy. As one of the region's key economic engines, the continued vitality of the visitor industry is critical to support the thousands of hospitality-based businesses operating in the region. Additionally, the industry indirectly supports thousands of non-hospitality-based businesses through business and employee spending on goods and services.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Participate as an active member of the Coastal Chambers Alliance in promoting a joint coastal hospitality agenda, which includes tourism marketing funding at the state level.

Federal Legislative Priorities:

- The Chamber will continue to work as a member of the state's H2B Coalition and national H2B Workforce Coalition in urging Congress to extend the H2B visa program to ensure employers can hire temporary, seasonal workers to adequately staff the region's hospitality industry.
- The Chamber supports efforts to increase both convention and meeting attendance and air travel. One example will be explor-

ing the feasibility of reinstating federal policies such as exemption of spousal travel costs to attend business meetings.

Local Priorities:

- The Chamber will work with the hospitality community, including area hotels and restaurants, to identify key issues, including identification of workforce needs and development of training and education programs to address this need.

Military and Federal Facilities Retention and Expansion

U.S. military operations in the Charleston region now account for more than 22,000 jobs and a total annual economic impact of more than \$3 billion. The Chamber will continue its military and federal retention and expansion efforts by focusing on a number of key areas:

State Priorities:

- The expansion of Red Bank Road to serve the Naval Weapons Station Charleston, Nuclear Power Training Command and Nuclear Power Training School and the Navy Health Clinic.
- Support legislation supporting the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

Federal Priorities:

- The location of Africa Command headquarters on the Naval Weapons Station Charleston.
- Advocating for a flag officer as Commander, Joint Base Charleston.
- The expansion of Red Bank Road to serve the Naval Weapons Station Charleston, Nuclear Power Training Command and Nuclear Power Training School and the Navy Health Clinic.
- Funding for construction of a new Fire/Rescue Station and Civil Engineering Complex at Charleston Air Force Base.

Local Priorities:

- One of the key decisions of BRAC 2005 was the formation of Joint Base Charleston through the realignment of management functions of the Charleston Naval Weapons Station to Charleston Air Force Base. The joint base in Charleston is one of 12 in the entire Department of Defense. The success of this transition to a joint base is critical to future missions, opportunities for expansion and the future concept of joint basing within the Department of Defense.
- The Chamber will work with Joint Base Charleston leadership to help educate the community on Joint Base Charleston as the new Joint Base is implemented in January 2010.
- The Chamber will work to promote adoption of recommendations of the newly updated Joint Land Use Study for the Charleston Air Force Base, Charleston International Airport and Charleston Naval Weapons Station.

Port Expansion/Waterfront

The Port of Charleston is one of the major economic engines for not only the Charleston region but also the State of South Carolina. The Chamber will continue to advocate for support of the Port of Charleston and its expansion plans.

State Priorities:

- Continue to support the expansion of the Port of Charleston at

the newly permitted facility on the former Naval Base.

- Urge the S.C. State Legislature to delay moving forward with the joint Jasper Port Terminal until estimates of the cost of dredging the Savannah River and channel to support the proposed port are better determined.
- Work to better position the Port of Charleston as a “priority economic asset” in the state of S.C. and to promote its continued expansion through the Chamber’s Port Development effort.

Federal Priorities:

- The Chamber will continue to advocate for support of the Port of Charleston and its expansion plans, particularly the development of a new terminal on the former Navy Base site. The Chamber also supports funding for harbor deepening in Charleston harbor.

Regional Land Use Planning/Workforce Housing Local Priorities

The Chamber works to seek the adoption of regional policies for balanced growth and to address priority transportation issues facing our region in air service cost, funding for roads/ bridges/ highways/ high speed rail and its impact on land use and quality of life.

Local Priorities

- Advocate for the adoption of the Chamber’s Sustainable Growth Ethic which focuses on building on prosperity through the principles of Choice, Balance and Stewardship.
- Advocate for the adoption of recommendations from the 2007 Housing Affordability Assessment study conducted by the Center for Business Research and adopted by the Chamber Board of Directors:
 1. The Development of a Regional Housing Strategy, which should be included in the regional plan now under development by the BCD Council of Governments.
 2. Each local government jurisdiction should develop a housing plan and develop and adopt a zoning ordinance that incentivizes the development of workforce housing.
 3. Private Sector Involvement: The Chamber will educate and encourage employers to consider the development of employers-assisted housing programs through down-payment assistance or other financial incentives to live closer to work.
- Additionally, the Chamber will continue to work with County and Municipal governments and the Developers Council to promote better coordination and communications throughout the region. The Chamber will also work to develop more uniform and consistent zoning regulations throughout the region.

Regulatory

The Chamber advocates for a business climate that is conducive to business expansion. The regulatory environment of the state must be balanced and not burdensome for business.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Actively monitor the progress of the S.C. Tax Realignment Commission and study the recommendations of the TRAC when released in March 2010. The Chamber will continue to advocate for comprehensive tax reform measures that ensure fairness, stability, predictability, accountability and compliance while

equitably balancing income, property and sales tax levies based proportionally on necessary services and the ability to pay.

- Support reform of South Carolina business license regulations to avoid ability for double taxation as well as develop a statewide appeals process.
- Support a comprehensive review of South Carolina's Laws and Constitution to ensure they are up-to-date and relevant and support global competitiveness.

Federal Priorities:

- The Chamber supports comprehensive immigration at the federal level to ensure a uniform approach. We need new immigration laws that are fair and balanced. These laws must meet the needs of our growing economy and the test of common sense. Only through this kind of comprehensive approach can an effective solution be reached. Securing the national borders is important, but it can not be accomplished in isolation.

A comprehensive approach containing a set of principles that make sense and can work. Such legislation must:

- Promote national security interests by requiring thorough screening of foreign workers and creating strong disincentives for illegal immigration.
- Be comprehensive in nature, addressing both current and future economic needs for workers.
- Address the status of undocumented workers already in the United States by requiring them to earn their legal permanent residency by paying hefty fines, working several years while under a temporary visa, learning English, paying taxes, and remaining free of criminal violations. A requirement to go home for a period of time would hurt the economy and the industries dependent on these workers.
- Strengthen the rule of law by establishing clear, sensible immigration laws that are effectively and vigorously enforced. This would require a reliable employment eligibility confirmation system that is easy to use so that businesses can decipher federal immigration laws without expensive lawyers.
- Establish a guestworker program that ensures that U.S. workers are not displaced by foreign workers. U.S. workers should have first shot at all job opportunities before they are opened up to foreign workers.
- Create an immigration system that functions efficiently for employers, workers, and government agencies. We need a fast and dependable way to match willing employers with willing employees, and visa limitations that fluctuate according to market needs.
- Ensure that all workers enjoy the same labor law protections as U.S. workers - not more, not less. Only by bringing undocumented workers out of the shadows can we protect them from the tiny minority of unscrupulous employers who might want to exploit them.

Local Priorities:

- The Chamber will work with local governments to ensure a positive business climate with a special focus on ensuring business license fees and regulations are not over burdensome to business.
- The Chamber will work to identify openings on local regulatory boards and commissions and work to secure appointments

from the business community. The Chamber will develop an inventory of members interested in serving on boards and commissions and document their levels of expertise.

- The Chamber will work to encourage all local governments to move their municipal elections to the first Tuesday in November to encourage wider voter participation.
- The Chamber supports the chairman of Charleston County Council be elected as a countywide office as recommended by the 2004-2005 Charleston County Commission on Management, Accountability and Performance (M.A.P.) Final Report.

Transportation & Infrastructure

Modern, up-to-date infrastructure must be maintained for the region to effectively compete in the global marketplace. Without the ability to move goods and services to customers, businesses cannot compete and succeed.

2010 State Legislative Priorities:

- Development of a comprehensive funding solution for South Carolina roads that includes a dedicated, re-occurring funding source for new construction and highway and road maintenance. The Chamber supports the following as methods for increasing infrastructure funding:
 - o Increase in the state's motor fuels tax and annual indexing of the motor fuel tax based upon inflation.
 - o Replacing the current statewide gas tax with a sales tax on gas and motor fuel.
 - o Moving license tag fees from the General Fund to S.C. DOT
- The Chamber supports public policies that encourage the deployment of next-generation broadband networks, maintain affordability, and apply consistent regulation to competing technologies and services. Broadband public policy should be designed to encourage continued investment in broadband infrastructure, and should create an environment where everyone has an incentive to invest and innovate – from network operators to software developers to content providers.
- Support S.C. DOT study for the development of a high speed rail corridor from North Carolina, through Florence and along S.C.'s Coast, including Charleston.

Federal Legislative Priorities:

- The Chamber supports the development of a new comprehensive federal plan to address the infrastructure and transportation needs of the nation, to ensure the effective and efficient movement of commerce, to connect all modes of transportation including air, rail, roads and water, and to plan for future increased capacity.
- The Chamber has joined a coalition of organizations organized by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to advocate for a national broadband policy that will promote investment in high-speed Internet networks to make new broadband services and applications available to business and consumers.

Local Priorities:

- The Chamber will continue to proactively work to expand low cost air service to the area.
- The Chamber led the 2004 campaign to promote passage of the half-cent sales tax in Charleston County. The Chamber will continue to actively monitor the implementation, spending and annual priorities for the half-cent sales tax throughout the next 25 years.

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